



# DEPARTMENT of the INTERIOR

## news release

Fish and Wildlife Service

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FISH AND WILDLIFE SERVICE DIRECTOR TO LAUNCH  
NEW INTERNATIONAL WETLANDS PROJECTS

John F. Turner, Director of the Interior Department's U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, today announced his agency will launch new international projects to help preserve the continent's dwindling wetlands at a series of environmental meetings in Mexico City.

The Director presented checks totaling \$125,000 from the U.S. Government for 12 vanguard wetland conservation projects in Mexico. Such areas are vital habitat for many waterfowl and other wildlife which have declined in numbers across the North American continent.

The new initiatives are associated with the North American Waterfowl Management Plan, which aims to improve wetland habitats and restore waterfowl numbers to 100 million by the year 2000. Mexico agreed in 1988 to participate in Plan related activities through the signing of a Tripartite Agreement among the wildlife agencies of the three nations.

"Only concerted action in all three countries will make the North American Plan work," Turner said. "After all, migrating birds don't recognize borders. Wetlands management has to be addressed continent-wide."

(more)

Work under the Plan began in the United States and Canada in 1987, and more than three dozen projects already have been started. The 12 projects announced by Turner are the first associated with the Tripartite Agreement in Mexico, where many of the continent's birds spend the winter before returning in summer to the United States and Canada.

Other participants in the Mexican conference include the Canadian and Mexican Governments, representatives of various Central American and Caribbean nations, and many other institutions concerned with wetlands conservation.

Turner said the Mexico City meetings "will help to clarify the directions the three countries need to take to achieve the maximum potential from one conservation partnership." Discussions will include an explanation of the North American Wetlands Conservation Act and exploration of the potential to involve Mexican projects as candidates for support.

Projects which the United States is helping to fund include an evaluation of natural resources of Ria Lagartos Bay in the state of Yucatan; a study to determine ways to improve habitat in the Centla Marshes of Tabasco; a study of ways to protect the birds of the wetlands of Laguna de Terminos in Campeche; and development of management strategies for migratory birds at Alvarado Lagoon in Veracruz.

The U.S. funding will assist work being conducted by various Mexican governmental agencies, environmental groups, and universities. The activities are being coordinated by Dr. Graciela de la Garza, head of the Mexican Government's Direction General for Ecological Conservation of Natural Resources.

The conferences include a meeting on current and future work under the Tripartite Agreement associated with the North American Plan, and a seminar on wetlands for Caribbean region countries. In all, more than 100 participants, including representatives from most of Central America, were expected to attend the sessions which will conclude April 20.